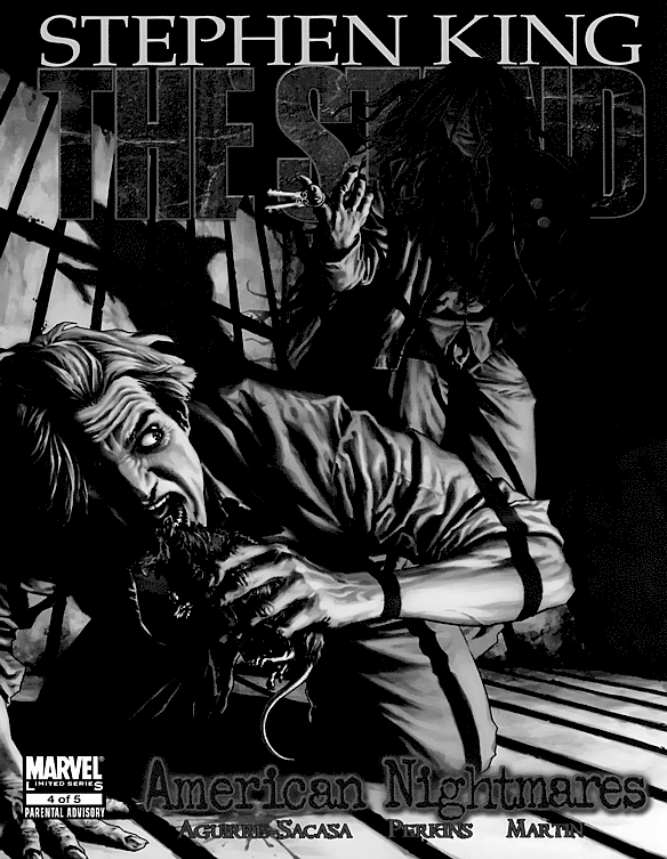


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STEPHEN KING

THE STAYED



MARVEL
LIMITED SERIES
4 of 5
PARENTAL ADVISORY

American Nightmares

AGUIRRE SACASA

PERKINS

MARTIN

STEPHEN KING THE STAND

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PREVIOUSLY IN THE STAND...

Someone at the Project Blue government facility in the Californian desert made a mistake. And now, the deadly flu-like virus "Captain Trips" has killed off 99% of the country's population.

The thus-far-uninfected are tasked with surviving in a world they no longer understand. Among the living:

Stu Redman, who has fallen into the company of artist Glen Bateman and his dog Kojak...

Frannie Goldsmith and Harold Lauder, all too ready to leave behind the loved ones they've buried in Ogunquit, Maine...

And—last and least—the unrepentant killer Lloyd Henreid, wasting away in his maximum security prison cell, praying for a miracle...

...no matter how dark it may be.



As the superflu wound down, there was a second epidemic that took out--at least in the U.S.--roughly sixteen percent of the survivors.

In a strictly Darwinian sense, it was the final cut. The unkindest cut of all, some might say.

Outside Atlanta, five-year-old Sam Tauber had been in shock since his whole family died from the Superflu.

Wandering in a wild blackberry field behind his house, he didn't notice the rotten well-cover half buried in the berry creepers.



In Lodi, California, Irma Fayette was reading on her porch when a 'hippie' man approached her. A twenty-six-year-old virgin, Irma had been morbidly afraid of rape all her life.

At the sight of the hippie, Irma put down her magazine and picked up her gun.

The pistol exploded when she pulled the trigger, killing her instantly. (No great loss.)



In Nyack, New York, George McDougall saw his twelve immediate family members die from the flu.

On doctor's orders, he'd started jogging ten years ago. Now, he jogged to keep the thoughts of his loved ones (Jeff-Marty-Helen-Karriett-Bill-George--) behind him.

Until, at fifty-one years of age, on the corner of Oak and Pine, he suffered a massive coronary.



Mrs. Eileen Drummond of Clewiston, Florida, took to getting very drunk on crème de menthe.

Grieving over a photo album of her deceased family, Eileen lit a cigarette in bed and fell asleep with it.

Most of Clewiston burned down that night. (No great loss.)



In Reno, Nevada, Arthur Stimson stepped on a rusty nail after swimming in Lake Tahoe. The wound turned gangrenous and he died (from shock and blood loss) while trying to amputate his own foot.



In Swanville, Maine, ten-year-old Candice Moran fell off her bike and died of a fractured skull.



In Harding County, New Mexico, the rancher Milton Craslow was bitten by a rattlesnake and died half an hour later.



In Milltown, Kentucky, Judy Horton went down to the walk-in freezer in her basement where she'd stored her husband Waldo and her little boy Petey.

To her mind, the superflu had taken care of the two biggest mistakes of her life.

But the freezer door accidentally shut and latched behind her, and Judy starved to death.



In Detroit, heroin addict Richard Hoggins found a stash in his dead dealer's rowhouse and shot up right there and then.

The stuff was ninety-six percent pure and hit his bloodstream like a highballing freight; Ritchie was dead six minutes later.



No great loss.

**PHOENIX, ARIZONA.
MAXIMUM SECURITY.**

...doo-dah,
doo-dah...

LLOYD HENREID, STARVING AND GOING INSANE.

Ride around
all night, ride
around all
day...

...doo-dah,
doo-dah...

The last meal served in
Lloyd's cellblock had been...
eight days ago?

In one of his cell's corners
was the skeleton of the rat
he'd killed in Trask's cell
five days ago.

The tail still intact
because it was too
tough to eat.

Pespite his efforts to conserve it,
almost all of the water in Lloyd's
toilet bowl was gone. He'd been
peeing into the corridor so as not
to contaminate his meager supply.)

Just last night he'd
eaten a cockroach.

It wasn't half bad, much tastier than
the rat, though he'd felt it scuttering
madly in his mouth before his teeth
crunched down on it.

A black and white comic panel showing Lloyd, a man with a beard and long hair, leaning against prison bars. He is looking down with a somber expression. A foot in a sneaker is visible on the left side of the frame.

Lloyd didn't want to eat Trask.
He didn't want to become a cannibal.
It was like the rat. He wanted to have
Trask within reach just in case.

...doo-dah,
doo-dah...

...doo-dah...

The main reason
Lloyd was still alive?

He was too full
of hate to die.

And all his hate had
coalesced into one
simple, imagistic
concept: THE KEY.

THE KEY was your reward
for following the rules.



They--the ones who had locked
him away--had THE KEY and could
do what they wanted to you.

But not this. Not
leave him to die a
slow, horrible death.

Please...

If only he had
THE KEY...



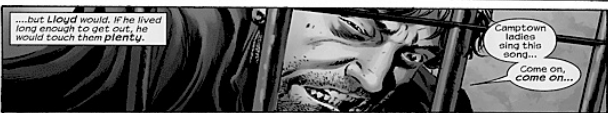
At first, Lloyd thought his hate was a useless thing because all the owners of THE KEY would have succumbed to the superflu already.

They would be beyond the reach of his vengeance.



Then, little by little, as he grew hungrier, Lloyd realized: The flu only would kill losers like him.

It wouldn't dare touch those who had THE KEY...



...but Lloyd would. If he lived long enough to get out, he would touch them plenty.

Camptown ladies sing this song...

Come on, come on...



Nothing personal, I ain't gonna eat you, old buddy--



--not 'less I have to.

Lloyd wasn't even aware he was caressing Trask's leg, nor that he was salivating.

SOUTH RYEGATE, NEW HAMPSHIRE.
STU REDMAN, GLEN BATEMAN, AND KOJAK.



Before lunch, Stu and Glen washed themselves in a cold, clear stream.



At lunch (Stu ate hugely of everything except the caviar), he learned Bateman's history.

That he'd been a sociology professor at Woodsbury College. That his wife had died ten years ago and that they'd been childless.

That when the superflu happened, Bateman accepted it with equanimity.

Because, he said, at last he would be able to retire and paint full-time, as he had always wanted to do.



Was Kojak your dog before?



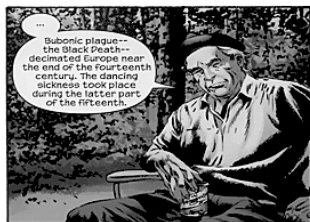
No, that would've been an amazing coincidence, wouldn't it? No, I believe Kojak belonged to somebody across town, and I took the liberty of re-christening him.

Say, will you excuse me a minute, Stu? I forgot I have something cooling in the river...



These were supposed to go with the meal. Stupid of me.

They taste just as good afterwards.



...
Bubonic plague-- the Black Death-- decimated Europe near the end of the fourteenth century. The dancing sickness took place during the latter part of the fifteenth.



Whooping cough near the end of the seventeenth. The first outbreaks of influenza happened near the end of the nineteenth.



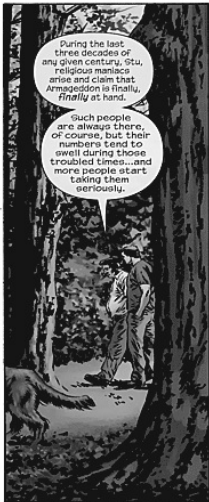
Hell, we're so used to the idea of the flu now, but what everyone forgets is that a hundred years ago it didn't exist...



What are you getting at, Glen?

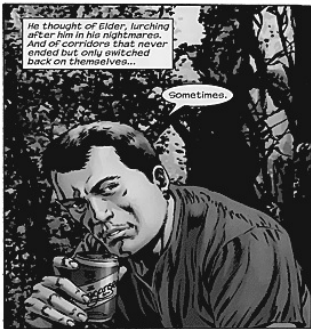


Let's walk for a bit.





Do you
ever have
bad dreams,
Stu?



He thought of Elder, lurching
after him in his nightmares.
And of corridors that never
ended but only switched
back on themselves...

Sometimes.



Ever since
boyhood, I've
been plagued by
amazingly vivid
dreams. But
lately...

...lately, I've
been having one
that's like...the *sum*
of all bad dreams. And
I wake up feeling as
if it wasn't a dream
at all, but...a
vision.



What
is it?



It's a man.
At least, I
think it's
a man...

"He's standing on the roof of a high building, or maybe it's a cliff he's on..."

"It's sunset, but he's looking the other way, east..."

"I can't see his face, but he has red eyes, and I have a feeling that he's looking for me..."



"And that sooner or later, he will find me and I will be forced to go with him...and that will be the end of me..."

"So I try to scream and... and..."



"That's when you wake up?"

"Yes."

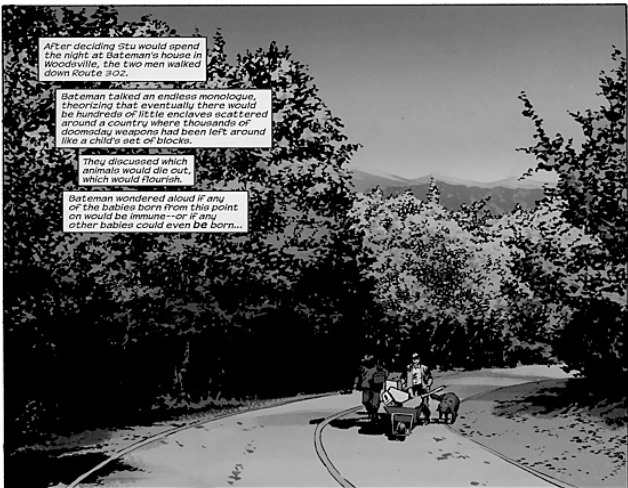


After deciding Stu would spend the night at Bateman's house in Woodsville, the two men walked down Route 302.

Bateman talked an endless monologue, theorizing that eventually there would be hundreds of little enclaves scattered around a country where thousands of doomsday weapons had been left around like a child's set of blocks.

They discussed which animals would die out, which would flourish.

Bateman wondered aloud if any of the babies born from this point on would be immune--or if any other babies could even be born...



Oddly, though, the thing Stu's mind kept returning to was Glen's dream, about the man with no face...



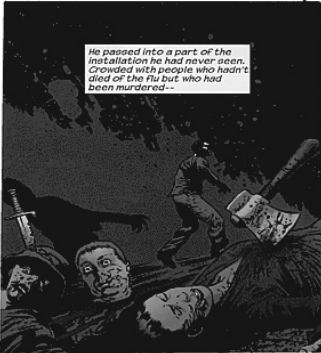
...and that night, asleep on Bateman's couch, Stu had his own nightmare.



A black and white comic panel showing a man in a dark suit running away from a large, dark, shadowy figure that looms over him. The man has a look of panic. In the background, another person is lying on the ground.

He was back in Stovington.
Elder was dead. Everyone
was dead. It was a tomb--

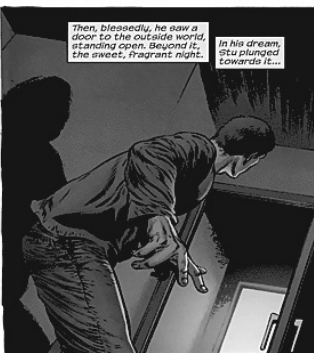
--and he couldn't
find his way out.

A black and white comic panel showing a man in a dark suit running through a crowded, dark room. He is looking back over his shoulder with a desperate expression. The room is filled with people, some of whom appear to be dead or unconscious.

He passed into a part of the
installation he had never seen.
Crowded with people who hadn't
died of the flu but who had
been murdered--

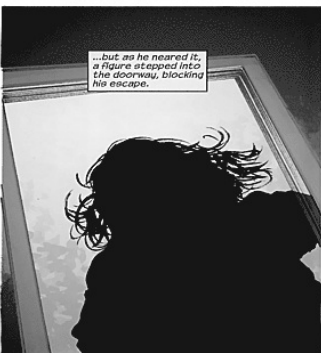
A black and white comic panel showing a man in a dark suit looking at a sign that reads "PLAGUE ROOM". The sign is on a wall, and the man is looking at it with a concerned expression.

He glimpsed a sign
on a locked room--

A black and white comic panel showing a man in a dark suit running towards a door. He is looking back over his shoulder with a desperate expression. The door is slightly ajar, and he is reaching for the handle.

Then, blessedly, he saw a
door to the outside world,
standing open. Beyond it,
the sweet, fragrant night.

In his dream,
Stu plunged
towards it...

A black and white comic panel showing a man in a dark suit standing in a doorway. He is looking back over his shoulder with a desperate expression. A large, dark, shadowy figure is blocking the doorway, preventing him from escaping.

...but as he neared it,
a figure stepped into
the doorway, blocking
his escape.



A cold, black shadow
where his face
should've been.

Two soulless red eyes,
flickering with a kind of...
lunatic glee.



His hands were
dripping blood,
Stu saw.



Heaven
and
earth...

All of
heaven and
earth...

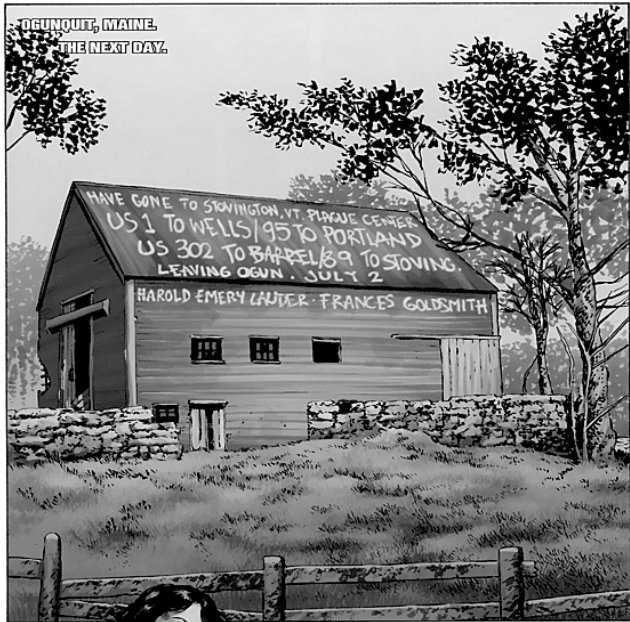


Stu jolted awake, afraid
he had screamed, but in
the next room, Glen
Bateman's breathing was
slow and regular.

Kojak, though, moaned
softly in the hallway, and
Stu supposed that even
dogs had nightmares,
sometimes.

They were perfectly natural
things, dreams and nightmares,
but Stu wouldn't be able to
sleep again until the first slivers
of dawn appeared in the window...

OGUNQUIT, MAINE.
THE NEXT DAY.





**PHOENIX.
DUSK.**

Hoooo-
hooooo!
Anyone
home?

At first, the sound was so far
away and strange that Lloyd
thought he might be dreaming it.



Anybody
home? Going
once, going
twice?



Strangely, Lloyd's first
thought was: *Don't answer.*
Maybe he'll go away.



Okay, I'm leaving
now, just about to
shake the dust of
Phoenix from my
boots--



No! Don't
go! Please
don't go!





Oh,
someone
sounds
hungry...



*CLOP-CLOP-
CLOP-CLOP-
CLOP-*

Lloyd wanted to burst into
tears of relief, but it was
fear he felt in his heart, a
terrible, growing dread.



The first thing Lloyd saw
were the boots. (Poke had
a pair like that!)



Then the belt buckle.

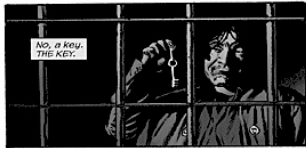


Then the
flushed
face.

Boo!



AAAAAAIIIEEEEE





Sure you are. A rat isn't a thing to eat. Neither is that fine fellow in the next cell.

I only say that because it looks like his left leg is missing a few pieces. And there are teeth marks.



You know what I had for lunch? A nice rare roast beef sandwich on Vienna bread with a few onions and some Gulden's spicy mustard.

And some homefries and chocolate milk to go with it...



...holy crow, I haven't introduced myself, have I? The name is Flagg, with the double g.

And I'm going to make you my right-hand man, Lloyd. Going to put you right up there with Saint Peter. What a deal, right?

Y-yes.



You'd like to get even with the people who left you here, isn't that right?



That anger again, replacing the fear.

Yes, sir, I would.



Now you aren't very bright, but you are the first. And I have a feeling you might be very loyal. You and I, Lloyd, we are going to go far.

All I need is your word.



W-word?



That we're going to stick together, you and me. No denials. There will be others soon--they're already on their way west--but for now, there's just us. I'll give you the key if you give me your promise.



I--
--promise.



The sound of tumblers in the lockbox turning--

The door rolling open--

You're free, Lloyd. Come on out.



COLOR COMMENTARY

By Michael Horwitz

A pioneer of digital coloring, Eisner Award winner Laura Martin has left her indelible stamp on THE STAND's universe and varied cast of characters. Here, Laura explains how she approached some of issue 4's most impressionable images.



PAGES 1 AND 2

MH: In this two page sequence that opens the issue, you begin with a uniform "real world" palette, but for the next page you use a separated, monochromatic scheme, as though each panel is in its own pocket world. Was there anything in the text that inspired this shift?

LM: The script did in fact start me thinking about these little scenes, and how to handle them. Page 1, panels 2-4 feature outdoor, daylight scenes in medium-to-longshots. Lots of ground and sky provide an objective distance between the viewer and the scene; nothing is really happening (yet), so each panel is just an innocent, everyday scene with just a hint of what's about to befall each person. So I colored those panels in rather banal color schemes.

Then, we get to the more personal panels. Roberto indicated in the script that "we can afford to get a bit more dramatic/gorier with these 'snapshots,'" so that's what cued me in:

These are far more personal, more immediate to the viewer; their harsh lighting and forced perspective are meant to shock us and throw us off-kilter. The more I simplified the colors, the more emotional each panel became. I wanted to force the viewer into each scene by making the viewer *feel* the mood -- gross browns and greens, desert-hot oranges, sweet pink on the bicycle, cold blue in the freezer.



PAGE 9

MH: Artist Mike Perkins volleys between using hard black and whites and textures with a water colored affect, especially to express flora. What does this require from you to keep a visual consistency or balance?

LM: It took me a few issues to settle on a working method for handling the inkwash foliage vs. the black-ink foliage. If I just color underneath the inkwash foliage, it tends to look muddy; if I replace the gray with a color, it can look too light. So I've figured out a way to tint the inkwashes. Sometimes it's easy, when there's no overlapping pure-black leaves; other times it's pretty time-consuming to tint only the inkwashed leaves while avoiding the pure black leaves. The trees to the right of the barn on page 15 are a good example of how I tinted the leaves in the background, but left the foreground tree's leaves alone.

When Mike just uses black ink, like in pages 9 and 11, he's already done all the heavy lifting--all I do is fill in the negative space with green! I also add a bit of sunlight haze to keep the background from getting too dark, or layer my own brushmarks over his when I think it looks cool.



PAGE 10

MH: This is such an extreme, almost magical image—what, if any, true life references do you use when conceptualizing something so abstract? Or do you just gun it and go with your gut? Also, while you have this explosion of color, you still maintain the starkness of Mike's line art. It's still grounded and focused as an image. Is it the cloak that does this? Do you have any rules of thumb when it comes to approaching such in-your-face color effects?

LM: You'd be amazed at how much my work is instinctual. I'll read the page and check the script for cues, and choose the basic colors based on the mood needed. Roberto asked for "as apocalyptic and mythical as you can make it," which was my cue to choose hellish, hot colors and balance them against dark gray tones. Looking back on it now, it was probably a subconscious nod to Frodo at the fiery lake in Return of the King...but honestly, I didn't even make that connection until just now!

I've got a huge file of reference photos, like clouds and fire, so I'll usually use those to start building the image. What I ended up with doesn't look anything like the original photos, thanks to the magic of Photoshop. I painted in the fire and grit flying around, and added the glows.

The cape was pretty distinct, so I simply kept the planes facing upward (away from the fire) in grays while pushing red tones into the areas facing toward the fire. It creates depth between the cape and Flagg's legs, indicating that the cape is blowing around in the maelstrom. Mike is the King of Wrinkles, so I just followed his lead.



PAGE 14

MH: Randall's invisible globe is another image that betrays THE STAND's supernatural roots. What challenges did coloring something you can't see and which hasn't been drawn provide?

LM: Yeah, that had us both stumped! How does one draw an invisible globe?! Mike left it out, which made sense, but clearly Roberto wanted to make the point that Flagg had the entire world in his hands. So there had to be a globe of some sort, somehow. At least that was my interpretation. I ran some ideas by Mike, Roberto and Editorial, and moved forward with your suggestion of Sue Storm's invisible bubble effect, but in red and with globe markings. It seemed to work out well.



PAGE 14

MH: The final seduction of Lloyd by Randall is one of the issue's most powerful pages, with the red consuming the cell like ink dipped in water as they leave the prison. Red has become Randall's trademark, but what inspired you to push it so graphically for this closing note?

LM: All three of us (Lee Bermejo, Mike and I) seem to be on the same page visually with regards to The Walkin Dude--wherever he goes, dark shadows envelop him, and the environment takes on a surreal, hellish feeling. On the #4 cover, Lee pushed Flagg half into shadow, and I tinted the shadows red. Mike did the same thing on the interiors; Flagg is heavily shadowed, so it stood to reason that I should continue the same color theme that I'd done on the cover, and infect the shadows with red.

Mike Perkins' black and white line art for the Issue #4 variant cover.

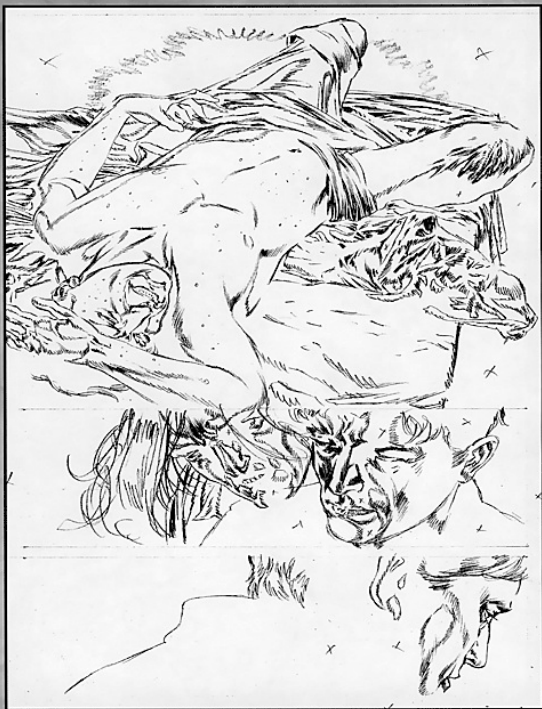


STEPHEN KING **THE STAND**

AMERICAN
NIGHTMARES
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5

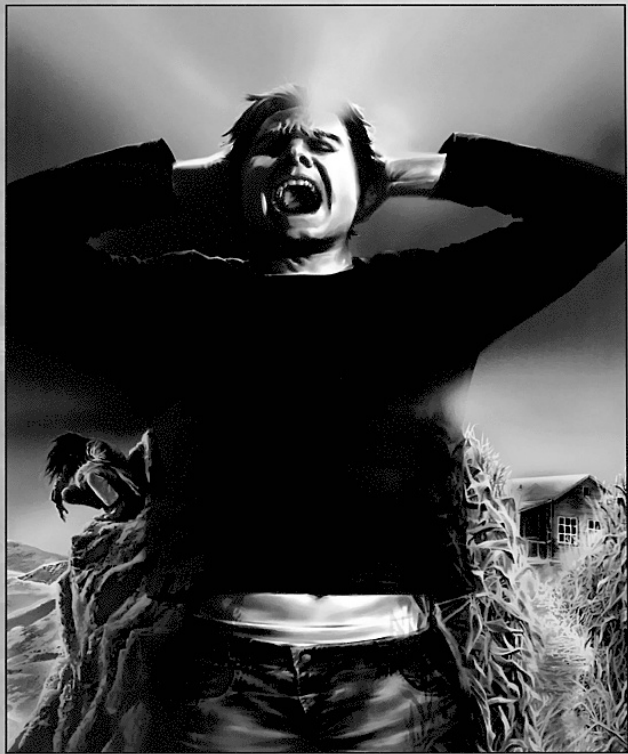


PREVIEW





Next: The last temptation of Nick Andros!



"Aguirre-Sacasa and Perkins bring King's story to life wonderfully, capturing the atmosphere of the story perfectly."
--David Wallace, comicsbulletin.com



The end is nigh as a deadly plague sweeps the nation and widespread panic overcomes the dying masses of America in a terrifying and inexorable tide. Who will be left to rebuild on the ruins of their past lives as the ancient rivalry of Good vs. Evil has only just begun?

Based on the popular apocalyptic novel by celebrated author Stephen King, *The Stand* brings together critically acclaimed writer Roberto Aguirre-Sacasa (*Sensational Spider-Man*, *Angel: Revelations*, HBO's *Big Love*) and the gritty visuals of artist Mike Perkins (*Captain America*) to tell a tale which begins at the end of the world.

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